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ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY AND MOVEMENT ON THE SHONA PLATEAU 1300-1850by: D.N. BEACH

This paper represents a refinement of an argument first presented in 1975,¹ and subsequently elaborated upon for publication in 1978,² but with greater attention paid to the place of the Shona plateau in the history of the southern Zambezia Iron Age as a whole. Essentially, it suggests that, whereas the kind of 'mobility' of Bantu-speaking peoples of southern Africa that was envisaged in the South African historical tradition before c.1970 is indeed a myth, the existing evidence for the history of southern Zambezia does suggest a degree of mobility on a local scale as part of a response to pressures on the environment created by long-term settlement on the southern Zambezan plateau after c.1300. The myth of Bantu mobility put forward by the South African historical tradition before c.1970, though accepted in good faith by respectable writers, has its roots in a racist argument dating back to the last century. This argument seeks to devalue African claims to political and economic rights in South Africa by suggesting that:

- (i) Africans, especially Bantu-speakers, were relatively recent immigrants to South Africa, arriving at the same time as, or not long before, the whites;
- (ii) that even where Africans were settled in areas before the arrival of whites, their attachment to their territory was relatively weak and they were all too ready to move from place to place in mfecane-style migrations of greater or lesser scale.³

In southern Zambezia this theory made itself felt in suggestions that such peoples as the Sotho, Venda and Shona came south across the Zambezi as differentiated peoples more or less in their present order of settlement. Thus, we have the assignation of the Early Iron Age to the Sotho, the crediting of the Zimbabwean state to the Sotho, the settlement of successive waves of 'Rozvi' and 'nuclear Karanga', and so forth.⁴ Recent archaeological work has shown a very different picture, with clearly identified Bantu settlement south of the Zambezi as early as the second century AD and further settlement over much of the Bantu-speaking area south of the Limpopo not later than the fourth to seventh centuries.⁵ Indeed, after this period, southward crossings of the Zambezi by Bantu-speakers appear to be limited to very minor groups in the lower and middle Zambezi valley after c.1300.⁶ From c.900, all the significant movements of population in southern Zambezia occurred

as reflex movements from earlier Bantu settlements from south of the Limpopo or the lower Limpopo valley, or as movements off the southern Zambezan plateau itself. These movements included:

- (i) the spread of the Shona-speaking Later Iron Age settlers northwards over the Limpopo after c.900,
- (ii) the movements of Sotho, Nguni and Tsonga onto the southern Zambezan plateau, c.1800, and
- (iii) movements of Shona-speakers off the plateau into the Zoutpansberg, coastal lowlands and lower Zambezi valley.

Before detailing these, however, there are a number of factors to be considered.

Environment

Whereas the entire area under discussion offered a viable environment for hunter-gatherer groups, and mobile-economy pastoralists were able to use such areas as the western Cape, as far as sedentary-economy agriculturalists, including those with a transhumance pastoralist economic sector, were concerned, there were definite preferred and non-preferred areas in southern Africa. These non-preferred areas, identified by the evidence for intensive settlement or the lack of it, considerably reduced the area of the map from the viewpoint of agriculturalists. South of the Limpopo, the non-preferred areas seem to have included the land that combined Kalahari or Karroo thorn-bush vegetation with an annual rainfall of less than 20 inches, and very high mountainous areas. This was equivalent to more than half of the actual area of sub-tropical southern Africa, so that in effect agriculturalists were confined between the western drylands and the sea. Between the tropic and the Zambezi, the non-preferred areas corresponded on the west of the southern Zambezan plateau to those areas below 3000', where varying conditions of dryland, sandveld, sodic soils or fly were to be found.⁷ On the northern, eastern and southeastern edges of the plateau, the equivalent line varied between 1200' and 3000', depending on the longitude. Some areas such as the Inyanga plateau and the very crest of the watershed between the Mazoe and Sabi river systems also seem to have fallen into this category.⁸ Allowance has to be made for climatic change, and there is documentary evidence for a cold period c.1538-1633.⁹ This division does not, of course, argue that settlement did not take place in non-preferred areas, but rather than most movements on the southern Zambezan plateau appear to relate to a gradual build-up of human and beast population in some favoured areas and a movement

outwards areas that had originally been less favoured. A major feature of this paper, however, is the evidence for a reflex movement of people, first away from the southern part of the plateau in the period c.1300-1500 towards the north and east and then from those areas back into the south between c.1650-1850, suggesting that areas that were originally over- and under-populated exchanged attributes as time went on. Although the relationship of the people and their animals to the environment is stressed here, intercontinental trade and its political consequences also played a part, and will be considered as part of the problem.

An economic-environmental model

Since this paper is basically concerned with southern Zambebian Later Iron Age peoples, only their economic model will be considered here. This economic model has been described elsewhere and it is simply summarized here.¹⁰ Essentially, it envisages an economy with an agricultural base, centre upon small site territories. . Movement from one site territory to another following reduced yields from the land did take place, but were not as common as was once supposed.¹¹ The agricultural base was backed up by branches of production that included hunting-gathering, herding, production for local trade (chiefly salt and iron) and production for intercontinental trade (chiefly gold and ivory). Although the relative importance of these branches varied, in no known case did they supplant agriculture as the base of production : there were no basically hunter-gatherer, herder or mining-manufacture Shona settlements. Essentially, herding of cattle was the main insurance of the people against drought, but mining, commercial hunting and manufactures - including production under difficult conditions for intercontinental markets under unfavourable terms of trade - were important factors.¹²

As far as territory was concerned, whereas the agricultural branch of production of each settlement was more or less tied to a site territory of a radius of one hour's walk from the village, the herding branch may have been able to use a transhumance grazing pattern where the geographical and political conditions permitted it.¹³ Certainly the Ndebele state of the 19th, century, using much the same site territories as the cattle-rich Changamire and Torwa states that preceded it, had such a transhumance pattern,¹⁴ and it is possible that the Zimbabwe state's pastoral economy was similarly organized.¹⁵ As far as population was concerned - and here the population of both humans and herd animals is meant - we have no absolute figures for the period before 1900, when there was a human population on the plateau of round about 700 000. Nevertheless,

it seems unlikely that the population had ever been much greater than this, and equally unlikely that the initial populations of either the Later or the Early Iron Ages had been as great. ¹It seems reasonable to assume a general rise in population over the 1800 years of Iron Age settlement, with would have been subject to variations at different times - for example, in the period 900-1100 when the Later Iron Age human and animal population arrived - and at different places.

A further factor to be borne in mind is that, whereas the post-1900 population of the plateau have had to cope with a deteriorating environment due to overcrowding, the pre-1900 population may have had what they considered to be environmental problems. In other words, Iron Age settlers who had occupied site territories that had previously been scarcely touched or not touched at all by other agriculturalists or herders would have been accustomed to getting a certain level of return from their output of effort into the land; given even a slight deterioration of the quality of their territories, insignificant by 20th.-century standards, and given information about the availability of relatively underused land elsewhere, there would be a strong motive for moving the settlement. Such information would have been available from those Late Stone Age people who had travelled outside their own annual territories in search of such items as ochre, from Early Iron Age iron- and salt-trade activities and, especially, from the trade activity that followed the connection of southern Zambezian gold and ivory resources to the markets of intercontinental trade after c.900. Certainly, by c.1500 it was possible for the Shona of the north and east to supply the Portuguese with information about the trade and political resources of the south and west, and it seems probable that they would have had information about the agricultural and herding potential of most of the plateau.

The mechanics of movement, given an initial motive for movement from the original settlement and information on prospective areas of resettlement, would have been relatively easy; with ten days' march of five miles a day for one stage, carried out between the threshing and hoeing seasons, a group could easily cover fifty miles in a year without jeopardizing the agricultural base of their economy. Even if the group stayed as long as five years at each staging point, it would be able to reach any desired point on the plateau within a few decades. The conditions under which it settled upon its strength relative to the people already resident there. Shona traditions of the 18th and 19th centuries are explicit that this was exactly the way in which movements were carried out.¹⁶

Such a model does no more than establish that there were good

theoretical reasons for movement within the Shona economy and environment; it does not prove that such movements occurred. Nor does it suggest that such movements were the general rule among the Shona: on the contrary, other evidence suggests that many dynastic groups remained on the same territory for centuries.¹⁷ Where this paper argues that movement took place, it does so according to the evidence.

The evidence for movement on the Shona plateau : data

Archaeological evidence for the movement of groups is in most areas confined to the period before c.1600, mainly because of the attention paid by archaeologists to the problems of the expansions of the Early and Later Iron Ages and, after c.1100, to the development of stone-building cultures. For the period after c.1600 there is almost no archaeological evidence on the settlements of ordinary groups, and this phase of Shona archaeology tends to be lumped together under the term 'Refuge'. Where archaeology does indicate movement, it does so on the basis of differences between earlier and later settlements that are so great as to preclude internal developments within one culture, or the diffusion of ideas and techniques from one culture to another without any population movement. In the case of southern Zambezia, the main archaeological evidence for movement involves

- (i) the movement of Early Iron Age peoples into an area of Late Stone Age settlement, evidenced by the simultaneous spread of ironworking, agriculture, pottery, hutbuilding and livestock,
- (ii) the movement of Later Iron Age peoples into an area of Early Iron Age settlement, evidenced by the complete replacement of a developing pottery tradition by a new, already-developed tradition,
- (iii) the spread of the Zimbabwe culture across the plateau, evidenced by the building of highly distinctive stone walling and the spread of Zimbabwe-type pottery,
- (iv) the immigration of the Nguni since 1900.

Documentary evidence, mostly Portuguese, very rarely mentions any kind of movement until the late seventeenth century, which is logical in view of the limited interests of the writers and the probability that, as pointed out above, movements were not the general rule among the Shona. Usually a document will indicate the latest possible date for a movement that is suggested by other evidence, by naming a certain dynasty as ruling a certain territory. Rarely, it will give the earliest possible date for a movement by naming a dynasty as ruling a territory which is known to have been occupied later by another group.

The bulk of the evidence for movement in late centuries comes from traditions, and therefore should be regarded with caution, but the normal rules of historical criticism apply to traditions as well as to documents, and where traditions can be compared with documents it has been found that they are capable of giving a picture of the past that is of varying accuracy, depending upon the time depth involved. In general, Shona traditions are concerned with establishing the rights of a lineage, labelled by a mutupo or totem that is passed on in the male line, to a given territory, and with the relationships between the members of a lineage. Shona traditions usually start with a point of origin, and describe a migration to a new land, the conquest of the new land and the course of politics within the lineage from the conquest up to the present. Points of origin can include anything from a mythical land north of the Zambezi in a period in the remote past to territories occupied within the last century. Migrations are recorded in varying detail, and become more detailed in the sections closest to the territory now occupied. Descriptions of the conquest tend to devalue the land-rights of the original inhabitants according to the numbers remaining distinct up to the present day, with the result that where a conquest appeared to take place long ago the original inhabitants are described in mythical terms. Lineage politics cling very closely to the traditions of the male lineage of the totem group, and there are relatively few tie-ins with other groups before the nineteenth century.¹⁸ It is possible to give generational dates to the lives of the rulers, but this depends upon the accuracy of the genealogies available, and generational dates should be thought of as a rather crude tool, to be used like a radio-carbon date rather than as a calendar date.¹⁹

The beginning of Shona settlement

It has been established for some time that there was a distinct break in the southern Zambezian Iron Age between the Early Iron Age Gokomere culture, dated from c.400 to c.950 (in the south) and to c.1050 (in the north) and the Later Iron Age cultures of Leopard's Kopje, Gumanye, Harare and Musengezi. These Later Iron Age cultures dated from c.950 in the south, and from c.1100 in the north. The break was remarkably clear, and, given the lack of evidence for any later immigration and the evidence for cultural continuity after those dates, the entire Later Iron Age has been assigned to the peoples now known as the Shona. Although the earlier dates were in the south and the later in the north, it was generally assumed that the Shona had moved in from the north.

Recent research into pottery types has now modified this picture. Whereas the break between Early and Later Iron Ages remains clear, it has become apparent that the Leopard's Kopje, Gumanye, Harare and Musengezi pottery traditions were even closer to each other than had been thought, and that they must be associated with the Touppe tradition to the southwest and the Eiland tradition to the south of the Limpopo, the whole cluster being termed 'Kutama' to stress their common origin. The ceramic relationships and the radiocarbon dates now suggest that the Shona-speaking peoples emerged out of earlier Iron Age settlements south of the Limpopo, moved north of the Limpopo and occupied the southern Zambezi plateau from south to north between c.950 and c.1100. It has been suggested that this was caused by buildup of human-animal populations in a favourable environment, leading to an emigration to relatively under-used settlement areas. Shona settlements north of the Limpopo during this early period were characterized by large cattle herds and, especially in the southern or Gumanye area, a preference for hilltop sites that might indicate warfare between Gumanye groups and their Gokomere predecessors.²⁰

The spread of the Zimbabwe culture

X Some time after c.1100, a Gumanye community developed into a town of more than 10 000 people, until it came to an end as a major centre after c.1450. This was the nucleus of the Zimbabwe state, an important political unit that based its economy upon agriculture, with strong emphasis upon herding and inter-continental trade. The Zimbabwe state appears to have used a transhumance grazing pattern in the valleys west of the capital. The capital itself was characterized by 'prestige' stone walling and a specialized type of pottery, and it is the distinctive type of pottery found in other, smaller, later 'prestige' sites across the plateau that makes it certain that groups of people from Zimbabwe migrated to set up new centres.²¹

The most important migration was that which went westwards, to found the Khami state in the southwest of the plateau, after c.1450. This was the main successor of Zimbabwe, and can be identified with the Torwa state mentioned in Portuguese documents as ruling the southwest up to the 1680s. Only two dynasties, the Tumbare bepe and Chiwundura soko, can be tentatively linked with the last phase of the Torwa state by traditions. The Torwa state, like Zimbabwe, was based on agriculture, intercontinental trade and herding, and it is possible that the latter branch of production was organized on lines similar to those of the later Ndebele state.²²

Other movements from Zimbabwe took place before the fall of the state.

By the twelfth century, a branch of the Zimbabwe culture had reached the coast between Sofala and Inhambane.²³ Another group that moved east across the Sabi to the land of Dondo had established the Nyakuimba-Musikavanhu dziwa dynasty and its stone building by the 17th century at the latest.²⁴ Other groups moved to the north-east and north. Some built stone zimbabwes in the land of Buhera, and there are traditions that the Mbiru shava dynasty, generational-dated back to the seventeenth century, was responsible for the latest of these. Other stone buildings farther to the northeast are less easy to link to any dynasty. One, in the land of Maungwe, may have been built by the Mutwira dynasty which preceded the Chipunza and Makoni shonga dynasties which were established by the early seventeenth century.²⁶ Another two, east of the Nyadiri, may have been built by a soko dynasty known as Makati which preceded the seventeenth-century Budya.²⁷ Others, including the Tsindi-Lekkerwater, Didcot, Black Adder and Ngezi sites, cannot be assigned to any dynasty.

One group of Zimbabwe-culture buildings can, however, be linked to a major dynasty, the Mutapa nzou-samanvanga lineage. These are the northern sites of Ruanga, Nhunguza and Zwongombe, in the upper Mazoe and Ruya valleys. This area was the centre of the Mutapa state, which was in existence by the mid-fifteenth century, the very period at which the Ruanga and Nhunguza zimbabwes were being built.²⁸ The traditions of the Mutapa dynasty, however, are only part of a much more complex structure of traditions that embraces pre-Mutapa groups within the area of the state and other dynasties covering an arc of land running west and southwest of the state. These traditions claim an origin in 'guruuswa' for the dynasties concerned, guruuswa apparently referring to a type of environment upriver from the areas now occupied by these dynasties. Within the Mutapa state area, there appears to have been an early settlement of Shona-speaking Tavara people of the nhari, shava and nguruve totems, which predated the arrival of the Mutapa dynasty, and which may be linked to the Musengezi culture.²⁹ There were also three groups which appear to have arrived from guruuswa and settled before they were absorbed by the rising power of the Mutapa : the Nyamapfeka-Kagore, Nyombwe and Chimanda groups.³⁰ West and southwest of the Mutapa state, in the Hunyani, Angwa and Umniati valleys and on the Urungwe and Mafungabusi plateaux, c.13 dynasties from guruuswa settled. In some cases we know that they were in their present territories by the early seventeenth century, but in others we have only unreliable generational dates. In one area, Urungwe, we know that the arrival of these dynasties had not occurred by the

sixteenth century, because the preceding Mbari people of the Ingombe Ilede culture were still there.³¹

To sum up, we know from archaeology that a number of communities left the Zimbabwe state area after c.1200, and settled over a wide area north, northeast, east and southeast of Zimbabwe. In the north, much of the movement had taken place by c.1450, but on the Urungwe plateau at least it did not have effect until after the early sixteenth century. It would seem probable, therefore, that there was no single migration in any direction, but rather a gradual series of movements by groups; even the establishment of the Mutapa state seems to have been something of a fragmented process. The reasons for the migrations could have included:

- (i) pressures on the environment in the Zimbabwe state even before its fall, such a pressure making itself felt in political as well as economic terms,
- (ii) a desire on the part of Zimbabwean groups to take over agricultural and grazing lands in the north and east,
- (iii) a desire to control the output of gold- and ivory-producing lands and
- (iv) a desire to control trade routes.

Reflex movements from the Mutapa state area before c.1650

Although much of the evidence is unsatisfactory, it appears that the movement of people from the south of the plateau into the Mutapa state area led to pressures on the land that led in turn to migrations towards the southeast, even before the occupation of such areas as Urungwe was complete. The land of Barwe, for example, was taken over by the Makombe dynasty of the nguruve totem. This group claimed to have been related to the Mutapa by marriage, but its totem was typically Tavara, and it is possible that the Makombe dynasty had been driven from the Mutapa state. This movement would appear to have taken place before c.1511.³² Very vague evidence suggests that an nguruve group from Barwe had founded the Chikanga dynasty in Manyika by that date.³³ Even less reliable traditional evidence claims that the territories of Teve and Danda had been occupied by mozo dynasties, presumably at about the same time. Claims that the foundation of these dynasties was the result of direct political action by the Mutapa dynasty are not fully borne out by the documents, although the Mutapa state certainly had political and military interests on the Sofala trade route.³⁴ In Tonge, on the coast between Sofala and Inhambane where very early settlement of Zimbabwe people had taken place, the Portuguese in the 1560s were told that the current dynasty had immigrated from the Mutapa state area

within the last two generations.³⁵ Further inland, groups from different parts of the Mutapa state had occupied the area held by Makati and founded the Budya dynasties by the second half of the seventeenth century.³⁶ In the land of Maungwe, south of Budya and west of Manyika, the Chipunza and Makoni dynasties had taken over from Mutwira's people by at least 1633, and possibly much earlier.³⁷

The Mutapa civil wars and the Rozvi conquests

The migrations mentioned so far all took place before the Portuguese had had any serious impact on the north and east: in spite of the long-range aims of the Barreto-Homem expedition of 1569-76 and the Portuguese involvement in the Mutapa civil wars up to 1609, it was not until 1629 that there was a major Portuguese presence in the north and east. From then until the 1670s, however, the combination of civil war in the Shona territories and the exploitation of the land by the Portuguese sertanejos reduced the north to chaos. Documents refer to many parts of the land as deserted, and whereas it is probable that the people of many areas simply took to the hills to avoid the Portuguese, returning later, traditions from within the Mutapa state suggest that there was resettlement of territories by new dynasties at about this time. The Mutapa Mukombwe, probably equivalent to Afonso, c.1663-83+, is said to have granted land to several dynasties. Some of these may have originated within the state,³⁸ but a considerable number of shumba-totem dynasties from Budya took part in this settlement. Some moved into the heartland of the state in the upper Ruya valley, while others moved farther west towards Urungwe.³⁹

A more significant accompaniment of the wars in the north was a series of migrations towards the southwest and southeast. However, this process, which began even before the conquest of the Torwa state, c.1684-96, by Changamire Dombo, continued well into the nineteenth century and is therefore unlikely to have the Portuguese factor as its prime cause throughout: eighteenth-century migrations are more likely to have been caused by the same environmental factors may also have provided the driving force behind the Changamire's campaigns. ✕

On the southern frontier of the Mutapa state - essentially, the central plateau - the political situation appears to have been very confused in the seventeenth century. In this area, grants of land were made by the Mutapa to such short-lived regimes as that of the Muslim ruler of 'Entombwe' in the 1630s⁴⁰ and there seem to have been migrations and settlements from the Mutapa state by such dynasties as Mangwende moyo (after the 1630s), Chikwaka mbano and Musana gumbo (before the 1690s).⁴¹ By the 1680s a member of the Changamire

moyo dynasty - which had been powerful in the state up to 1506 but which had faded into obscurity after the 1540s - became important as a keeper of the Mutapa Mukombwe's cattle herds. Granted lands bordering the state - probably those around Zhombwe and Hurungwe mountains between the Nyagui and Nyadiri rivers - this Changamire rebelled against the Mutapa and attracted large numbers of followers who were later known as 'Rozvi'. The Changamire became famous for his anti-Portuguese campaigns of 1684-96, but his most important achievement was the conquest of the southwestern Torwa state. This has been weakened by a civil war and Portuguese invasion in the 1640s, and was probably an easy prey to invasion; the conquest was quick and apparently not resisted strongly, while some of the personnel of the Torwa state were incorporated into the Rozvi.⁴²

This Changamire conquest involved the movement of Rozvi dynasties out of the northeast in towards the southwest. Some, such as the Gwangwava moyo dynasty, started before the great campaigns and reached only as far as western Buhera.⁴³ Others, such as the Nyamweda moyo, Nyandoro nhari and Samuriwo moyo lineages, moved a little later over equally short distances to the upper Hunyani, Tsunga and Mani.⁴⁴ Others again went all the way to the new Changamire state. Some, such as Nerwande soko and Mavudzi shava settled in the state, others occupied lands on the eastern frontier of the state, but over a protracted time: the Negove moyo line appears to have settled south of Buhwa early in the eighteenth century, but the Nyamhondo and Negari moyo groups settled in the same area considerably later.⁴⁵

The Changamire conquest of the southwest, however, was only one half of a general migration out of the central plateau area. Apparently at about the same time a group of mainly moyo relatives of the Rozvi migrated to and conquered the southeastern highlands under the general leadership of the Mutema dynasty of Sanga. Apart from the Musikavanhu dziva dynasty, which first resisted and then co-existed with the moyo, little opposition was offered by the previous inhabitants.⁴⁶

Two further conquests by the Rozvi took place after the foundation of the Changamire state. One of these involved a migration in two waves that first went north to take over the Mafungabusi plateau under the Chireya shava dynasty some time before the 1760s, and from there west to the lower Gwaai and Deka rivers under the Hwange shumba dynasty. This latter group was responsible for some of the last 'prestige' buildings to be constructed in southern Zambezia.⁴⁷ The other major conquest was by the Singo, a group of Rozvi who crossed the

Limpopo some time after the 1720s to conquer the Thovela state of the Venda and to add a further Shona element to an area that had already been influenced by Shona settlement and culture.⁴⁸

The resettlement of the central plateau

The departure of the Changamire Rozvi for the southwest and the moyo settlers for the southeast appears to have left something of a vacuum in terms of settlement in this area. Traditions refer to many small groups, mostly described as 'Rozvi' or moyo, who were conquered by immigrants from the north, northeast, east and even the south. This process appears to have begun at about the beginning of the eighteenth century with the immigration of the Seke shava and Chinamhora soko dynasties from the southeast and south respectively,⁴⁹ and continued with the Mangwende moyo conquest of Nhowe,⁵⁰ the Svosve and Mudzimirema soko occupation of Mbire III and Chirimuka⁵¹ and the Chihota tembo and Nenguwo shumba movement into the less valuable watershed area.⁵²

By the latter half of the eighteenth century, the central plateau area appears to have become more or less fully occupied by these new dynasties, and two major movements that occurred later led to settlements farther west. These were the migrations of the Mashayamombe and Marome mara dynasties from the northeast to the middle Umfuli and upper Umniati valleys,⁵³ and the occupation of the headwaters of the Mazoe by the Hera of Hwata and Chiweshe.⁵⁴

The breakup of Old Buhera

The territory of Buhera, under the Mbiru shava dynasty, presents an interesting contrast to the situation immediately to the north or south of it. Whereas in those areas, there was an almost complete replacement of older dynasties by new ones, the Mbiru dynasty held on to much of its land. However, considerable changes occurred. The old capital and zimbabwe of Gombe was abandoned and a new centre set up west of the Marabada hills. The dynastic title was changed to Nyashanu, and for a while Buhera appears to have expanded its territory, while by the end of the century Hera groups of Hwata, Chiweshe and Mapanzure had emigrated to the north and south.⁵⁵ On the other hand, by the end of the eighteenth century the Hera had lost their territory north of the Sabi, and by the 1850s the Njanja had split Buhera in two by occupying a broad strip of land across the territory.⁵⁶

Buhera was also the point of origin for the ngara-Govera dynasties who moved into the south of the plateau in the eighteenth century,⁵⁷ and it contained

the area - Rutanga hill - from which the dziwa Ngowa and Hiya diverged to south and north respectively. The progress of the Hiya, who went as far north as the Mazoe valley and fought with or for most of the dynasties between there and the Changamire state in the second half of the eighteenth century, before settling down on the frontier of the latter. In some ways, the career of the Hiya is like a miniature eighteenth-century mfecane, and it tends to support the idea put forward here; that Buhera, like the lands of the north and east, was becoming overcrowded by the eighteenth century.

The resettlement of the southern plateau

If the central plateau after the departure of the Changamire Rozvi and southeastern highland movu dynasties was almost wholly resettled by dynasties from the north, east and from Buhera to the south, the resettlement of the southern plateau to the south of Buhera was even more complete, but before we discuss this it is worth taking a look once again at the situation in the north and east in order to understand the conditions that lay behind the beginnings of eighteenth-century movements into the south. By the eighteenth century, the pattern of settlement had become stable, and there were no new settlements in the area as a whole, until the last half of the nineteenth century, when Rozvi refugees settled on the upper Sabi and the twentieth century when land alienation began. There was, however, an increasing settlement of non-preferred areas. Some of the movu people of the southeastern highlands moved down into the drylands of the middle Sabi valley and settled there, while others began to move west over the river.⁵⁹ In the Inyanga highlands, which had been settled in the Early Iron Age, a branch of the Tonga people of Barwe moved into this agriculturally uninviting area and began, nevertheless, to carry out shifting cultivation on the hillside, using terracing and irrigation. This obviously poor group was threatened by raiders and kept their stock in pits at the centre of their villages and near their stone fort-settlements. This Uplands culture flourished, if that is the right word, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶⁰ It was then conquered by Shona settlers from Manyika, who took over the area round about the time of the 1795-1875 civil wars and whose dialect was eventually strongly affected by the Tonga.⁶¹

These movements, which represented an extensive exploitation of the eastern territories, suggest growing overpopulation, a suggestion that is confirmed by a contemporary account of Manyika.⁶² Such areas as Manyika, with a limited hinterland in which to expand, also contributed to the resettlement of

the central and southern plateau. More fortunate territories such as Maungwe made much less of a contribution, while less fortunate areas such as Budya made a much greater contribution, in so far as the numbers of emigrant dynasties indicate this.⁶³

Meanwhile, in the large part of the southern plateau west of the Sabi, south of Buhera, east of the Changamire state and north of the southeastern lowveld, there was a very different situation. In this large area, which was in effect the territory of the Zimbabwean state, by the late seventeenth century there were only small, independent units scattered across the countryside which were conquered by the Karanga immigrants from the north and east. This is, of course, the picture presented by traditions, and as noted earlier Shona traditions tend to devalue the land-rights of early groups by representing them as being small and insignificant. There are several reasons for believing that, in this case, the traditions are accurate and that there was, between the fall of the Zimbabwe state and the settlement of the modern Karanga, a period of political fragmentation in the south. In the first place, it is remarkable that not one of the pre-Karanga dynasties of the south succeeded in retaining its own territory, either as an independent unit or under one of the new groups; indeed, intensive local research has found difficulty in locating survivors of these pre-Karanga groups.⁶⁴ The last pre-Karanga groups to survive as independent groups on their own ground were the NeManwa shumba dynasty which was expelled from its land near the site of Zimbabwe in the early nineteenth century, the move Mazhe who were driven from Nyaningwe hill at about the beginning of the century, and the Pako, who lost the Naka hills considerably later. The Chingoma dziwa dynasty did survive in the south, but at the cost of abandoning its old lands around Romwe hill and moving to the southeast of Belingwe.⁶⁵ Such a uniform failure of old-established groups to maintain their identity in the face of immigration was unparalleled in the centre, north or east of the plateau, where many old groups survived. Secondly, although the dating of the conquests of these pre-Karanga groups by the Karanga rests solely upon the generational dates of the latter and is thus subject to questioning, the Karanga conquest can hardly be pushed back much earlier than the seventeenth century without clashing with the expansion of the Zimbabwe culture. Being relatively recent, therefore, these traditions should be relatively reliable. As will be seen, the overall generational dating pattern for the resettlement of the south is a logical one. In other words, it is suggested that the picture presented by traditions, that there was a relatively small, politically fragmented population

of the hinterland of the Zimbabwe state between its fall and c.1750-1850, is essentially accurate.

The pattern of settlement in the southern plateau area was one of gradual expansion from north-east to southwest, but with some interesting variations. In the first place, some small groups of Karanga such as those of Nesongano shumba, Gurajena dziva or Nemarundwe nzou moved ahead of the main settlement to conquer the pre-Karanga, before being conquered in their turn by later groups.⁶⁶ Secondly, the Duma moyo dynasties, which took over the Bikita highlands east of Zimbabwe at about the beginning of the eighteenth century, founded a confederacy that appears to have initially staked out claims to a wide area of the southern plateau before the rest of the Karanga migrations were well under way. This confederacy contracted slightly in area as the century wore on, but remained intact and independent.⁶⁷ In essence, the occupation of the south fell into two phases. In the first phase, before c.1800, Karanga settlers occupied all of the lands between the Tokwe-Ngezi rivers and the borders of the Duma confederacy, and then crossed the Tokwe at its lowest reach to occupy a tongue of land that ran south into the lowveld.⁶⁸ It was rather as though these earlier settlers were moving down a corridor between the Changamire state and the Duma confederacy. In the second phase, from c.1800-c.1850, the wave of Karanga settlement rolled west of the Tokwe-Ngezi into the Changamire state, and continued to do so until brought to a halt on the frontiers of the area settled by the Ndebele after c.1840.⁶⁹ It is remarkable, in view of the ideas of the destructiveness of the mfecane that were current only a decade ago, that this process of resettlement of the southern plateau shows no trace of interruption by either Ngoni or Ndebele raids; although at least three dynasties in the central plateau area were forced to abandon their lands in the 1860s under Ndebele attack, the southern Karanga expansion continued to the point where in 1900 the south was one of the heaviest-populated parts of the country.

Shona movements in the context of southern Africa

It was shown earlier in this paper that from the point of view of cattle-herding agriculturalists south of the Zambezi after c.900, the amount of preferred-environment territory available was not unlimited, either in southern Africa as a whole or on the Shona plateau. On the Shona plateau, the history of human and animal settlement appears to have been one of a great reflex movement, taking centuries, between the original migrations from Zimbabwe before c.1450 and the

eventual reoccupation of the southern plateau before c.1850. The Karanga reoccupation of the south between c.1700 and c.1850 was, as has been shown, an extension of the movements of the seventeenth century but by the middle of the eighteenth century the effect of historical processes from outside the Shona area was beginning to be felt. By the end of the century, the Hlengwe chauke section of the Tsonga was pressing upon Shona-occupied territory on the lower Sabi, and by c.1850 much of the southeastern lowveld around the Lundi and Bulye rivers had been taken by the Hlengwe from their weaker Shona predecessors. Only the Hlengwe preference for a lowveld environment appears to have prevented major Karanga-Hlengwe clashes before colonial rule.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, had the Hlengwe pressure continued, the competition for the southern plateau between Karanga from the northeast, the existing Changamire state in the south west and immigrants from the south, such as the Mbedzi, Twamamba, and Lemba who were leaving the Venda country in the early nineteenth century,⁷¹ might have led to some interesting situations if the Ndebele had not arrived and superimposed their own major settlement upon the southwest. The settlement of the Ndebele and Gaza Nguni among the Shona represents the climax of the pre-industrial migrations since c.1750, although it was probably relatively less demographically significant than the original settlement of the Shona themselves.

The importance of the Shona movements on the southern Zambezian plateau between c.1300 and c.1850 lies in its implications for the history of southern Africa as a whole. The southern Zambezian plateau represented, as far as cattle-herding agriculturalists were concerned, a smaller version of the plateau environment south of the Limpopo. The movements of the Shona over a period of centuries represent for the historian a model of the way in which people farther south may have reacted to similar environmental pressures and opportunities. Finally, the way in which the southern plateau - the hinterland of the Zimbabwean state - was resettled in the last century of the period under discussion, to become one of the heaviest-populated parts of the plateau, suggests that with an overall growth of human and animal population the plateau was nearing the point of full occupation in terms of the Shona economic pattern when white colonization occurred. This has obvious implications south of the Limpopo in terms of economic origins of the mfecane.

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⁴ R. Summers, Zimbabwe a Rhodesian Mystery, Johannesburg, 1963, 83; W. Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, London-Dar es Salaam, 1972, 78; D.P. Abraham, 'The roles of "Chaminuka" and the mhondoro-cults in Shona political history', The Zambesian Past, eds. R. Stokes and R. Brown, Manchester, 1966, 32-3; M. Wilson, 'The Sotho, Venda and Tsonga', Oxford History of South Africa, i, eds. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, Oxford, 1969, 168-72.

⁵ T.N. Huffman, 'The Early Iron Age and the Spread of the Bantu', S.Afr. Archae.Bull., 25, 97, 1970; T.N. Huffman, 'The Linguistic Affinities of the Iron Age in Rhodesia', Arnoldia. Rhod., vii, 7, 1974; T. Maggs, 'Some recent radiocarbon dates from eastern and southern Africa', J.Afr.Hist., xviii, 2, 1977.

⁶ Two small groups of Marave people entered the Mutapa state from the north in the early seventeenth or late sixteenth centuries : António Bocarro, 'Decade, c.1631-49', Records of South Eastern Africa, ed. G.M. Theal, iii, Cape Town, 1899, 361; the Ingombe Ilede culture on the Urungwe plateau between the thirteen and sixteenth centuries appears to represent an immigration from the north, P.S. Garlake, Great Zimbabwe, London, 1973, 160, and Huffman, 'Linguistic affinities', 5; the Chundu-Chimombedynasty of Urungwe claims a northern origin, J.D. White, 'Some notes on the history and customs of the Urungwe District', NADA, x, 3, 1970, 41-5; the Njanja, who settled in western Buhera at about the beginning of the eighteenth century appear to be of northern Zambebian origin, D.N. Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories, in preparation, Ch.2.

⁷ Rhodesia. its natural resources and economic development, ed. M.E. Collins Salisbury, 1965. Not all sodic soils precluded settlement.

⁸ Ibid. The Mazoe-Sabi watershed area was characteristically occupied in recent times by minor dynasties and outliers of major dynasties to the north

and south.

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¹¹ R.M.G. Mtetwa, 'The "political" and economic history of the Duma people of south-eastern Rhodesia from the early eighteenth century to 1945', unpubl. D.Phil, thesis, University of Rhodesia, 1976, 230.

¹² Beach, 'Shona economy', 37-65.

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¹⁶ For a vivid example, see J.H. Seed, 'A glimpse of native history', NADA, 14, 1936-7, 5-10.

¹⁷ The Mutapa dynasty can be dated by documents back to c.1490, the Makombe dynasty of Barwe to c.1510, the Nhova-Chingowo-Chipuriro, Zvimba and Chirau dynasties to c.1631-49, the Makoni dynasty to 1633, the Ngezi dynasty to 1683.

¹⁸ Beach, Outline, Ch.2.

¹⁹ D.N. Beach, 'Generational dating-systems for Shona dynasties', unpubl. paper, 1973, to be revised for publication in two parts.

²⁰ Huffman, 'Linguistic affinities'; T.N. Huffman, 'A guide to the Iron Age of Mashonaland', Occ. Pap. Nat. Mus. Rhod., A4, 1, 1971; T.N. Huffman, The Leopards Kopie Tradition, Salisbury, 1974; T.N. Huffman, 'The origins of

Leopards Kopje : an 11th century difecane', Arnoldia. Rhod., in press; T.N. Huffman, 'The Iron Age of the Buhwa district of Rhodesia', Occ. Pap. Nat. Mus. Rhod. in press. The earliest dates for the Leopard's Kopje culture are from 900 ± 100 to 1130 ± 50 , equivalent to calendar dates from 940 to 1200; for Gumanye, 1075 ± 150 (1090-1120); for Harare, 1125 ± 45 to 1490 ± 120 (1150-1435) and for Musengezi, 1175 ± 100 to 1285 ± 95 (1210-1340).

²¹ Garlake, Great Zimbabwe; T.N. Huffman, 'Zimbabwe : Southern Africa's first town', Rhod. Prehist., vii, 15, 1977. Radiocarbon dates for Zimbabwe are 1300 ± 50 , 1305 ± 40 , 1380 ± 90 and 1440 ± 150 , equivalent to calendar dates from 1310 to 1390.

²² Garlake, Great Zimbabwe, 166-70; T.N. Huffman, 'The rise and fall of Zimbabwe', J.Afr.Hist., xiii, 3, 1972, 356; K.R. Robinson, Khami Ruins, Cambridge, 1959; radiocarbon dates for the Khami culture include 1455 ± 95 (1410-20, basal), 1380 ± 50 and 1510 ± 50 (1360-1445, heartwood), 1690 ± 40 (1530-1615) and 1700 ± 50 (1530-1630); Portuguese documents referred to a southwestern area of 'Butua', sometimes in general terms, but more often as a specific, cattle-and-gold-rich state, from c.1512 to the 18th century. The only early references to its political leadership, in 1552, 1633, 1683 and 1696, name 'Torwa'. Between the latter two dates, the Torwa were replaced by the Changamire.

²³ P.S. Garlake, 'Excavation of a zimbabwe in Mozambique', Antiquity, 1976, the earliest radiocarbon date is 1190 ± 70 (1175-1330).

²⁴ J.K. Rennie, 'Christianity, colonialism and the beginnings of nationalism among the Ndaus of Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1935', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 1973, 574-6, dates the foundation of this dynasty to *1616-43.

²⁵ Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories, Ch.2, dates the death of the 'founding' Mbiru-figure to *1671 \pm 40. 'Mbiru', however, probably represents a whole dynasty.

²⁶ The Chipadze ruin is radiocarbon dated to 1300 ± 120 - 1510 ± 90 (1300-1445); the Makoni dynasty was already in occupation by 1633, but there is a strong hint that it was preceded by the related Chipunza dynasty, which would put the conquest of Mutwira by the shonga Chipunza-Makoni dynasty much farther back.

²⁷ The Budya immigration is dated by D.P. Abraham, 'The Early Political History of the Kingdom of Mwene Mutapa, 850-1589', Historian in Tropical Africa.

Salisbury, 1962, 84, to c.1700. However, if the traditions of dynasties from Budya who claim to have settled in the Mutapa state in the time of Mutapa Mukombwe are accurate, this immigration could have taken place well before c.16 the probable beginning of Mukombwe's reign, D.N. Beach, 'The Mutapa dynasty', History in Africa, 3, 1976, 9.

²⁸ Ruanga and Nhunguza are radiocarbon dated to 1500 \pm 85 (1420-1440) and 1580 \pm 100 (1460-1500); the Mutapa state was already established by c.1490, Diogo de Alcáçova to the King, 20 November 1506, Documents on the Portuguese in Mocimboa do Alto and Central Africa 1497-1840, i, Lisbon, 1962, 391-3.

²⁹ Beach, Outline, Ch.2.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² A.F. Isaacman, 'Madzi-manga, mhondoro and the use of oral traditions - a chapter in Barotsi religious and political history', J.Afr.Hist., xiv, 3, 1973; the Makombe title is not mentioned in documents until the seventeenth century, and there is so far only one unreliable king-list of great length, H. von Siedow, 'The Rhodesian Tally', NADA, 31, 1954, 53.

³³ Abraham, 'Early political history', 83; a variant of the 'official' Manyika history, claiming Manyika dynastic origins in 'Sena' might be a reflection of this: J.D. White, Esitshebani, Shabani, 1974, 180.

³⁴ Beach, Outline, Ch.5.

³⁵ André Fernandes to Fr. Provincial, 24 June 1560, Documents, vii, 471.

³⁶ Beach, Outline, Ch.5, see ref. 27 above.

³⁷ Beach, Outline, Ch.5, see ref. 26 above.

³⁸ Beach, Outline, Ch.4.

³⁹ Beach, Outline, Ch.4.

⁴⁰ Macedo, 'Informação, 1633'.

⁴¹ D.C. Chanaiwa, 'History of the Nhowe before 1900', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis,

UCLA, 1971; the Mangwende dynasty was still in the Mutapa state in the 1630s, but later moved to Matukutu on the upper Mazoe; the Musana dynasty had presumably moved south of the Mazoe by 1696, since the Mudzimu offshoot had already reached the middle Zambezi by that date.

⁴² The two references to the Changamire dynasty from before 1550 connect it with the Mutapa state and the hinterland of Sofala, (Alcáçova to the King, 1506 and João Velho to the King, c.1547, Documents, vii, 169-73). Documents after 1684 describe the recent conquest of the Torwa state by a Changamire who had recently risen to power from obscurity in the Mutapa state: Caetano de Mello de Castro to the Viceroy, 26 and 28 June 1684, GA, LM, 49; Manoel Vaz to the Governor, 28 June 1688, GA, LM, 53; António da Conceição, 'Tratado dos Rios de Cuama, 1696', O Chronista de Tisuary, 1867. From then until 1857, all documents locate the Changamire in the southwestern state of 'Butua'. For the traditional evidence, see Beach, Outline, Ch.7.

⁴³ NAR N3/33/8, J.W. Posselt, NC Charter to CNC, c.1 January 1904.

⁴⁴ Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories, Ch.3. G-dates are *1636±56 for Nyamweda, *1735±36 for Nyandoro and *1691±44 for Samuriwo.

⁴⁵ Beach, Outline, Ch.7 and Shona Dynastic Histories, Ch.4. G-dates : *1730±40 for Negove, *1799±32 for Negari and *1811±28 for Nyamhondo.

⁴⁶ Rennie, 'Ndau', gives G-dates of *1678 for Mutema, *1661 for Mapungwana, *1637 for Sahodi, *1651 for Garahwa and *1646 for Mutambara, these being birth-dates under his system as opposed to death-dates under mine.

⁴⁷ Beach, Outline, Ch.7; the Chireya dynasty of Shangwe is first mentioned in a document of 1784; the Hwange dynasty G-dates to *1727±36.

⁴⁸ G.J. Liesegang, 'New light on Venda traditions : Mahumane's account of 1730', Hist.in Afr., 4, 1977; Beach, Outline, Ch.7.

⁴⁹ Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories, Ch.3; G-dates; Seke, *1719±40 and Chinamhora, *1744±40.

⁵⁰ Ibid.; Mangwende, *1764±32.

⁵¹ Ibid.; Svosve, *1740±36. The territory is termed Mbire III here to distinguish it from Mbire I or Dande and Mbire II or Gore, both in the Mutapa state

All early documentary references to Mbire appear in context to the northern two, and the first reference to a southern Mbire is in c.1780.

52 Ibid.; Chihota, *1760 \pm 36, Nenguwo, *1793 \pm 36.

53 Ibid.; Mashayamombe, *1792 \pm 28 and Maromo, *1790 \pm 32.

54 Ibid.; Hwata, *1827 \pm 24 and Chiweshe, *1816 \pm 36.

55 Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories. Ch.2.

56 Ibid.; the arrival of the Njanja in Buhera G-dates from *1724 \pm 40, and the establishment of their independent dynasty from *1805 \pm 28. The Masarirambi-Mutekedza dynasty of western Buhera dates from *1746 \pm 28.

57 Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories. Ch.4; Zimuto dates from *1738 \pm 36 and Nemavuzhe, *1760 \pm 36. I am indebted to Dr S.I. Mudenge for information modifying my original Zimuto date of *1792 \pm 28.

58 Ibid.; the original Hiya have not survived as a distinct group, but documents show that they were active from the 1760s to the 1790s.

59 Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories, Ch.2. The groups include the Chiadzwa and Chamutsa communities of Bocha, Buhera and Gutu.

60 R. Summers, Invanga, Cambridge, 1958; J.G. Storry, 'The settlement and territorial expansion of the Mutasa dynasty', Rhod.Hist., 7, 1976; radiocarbon dates for the Uplands culture are: 1750 \pm 50 (1650), 1810 \pm 45 (1620-1780) and 1875 \pm 40/1890 \pm 45.

61 Storry, 'Mutasa dynasty'.

62 Anonymous, 'Descrição Corográfica do Reino de Manhiça, c.1780', AHU Moç Cxs 17.

63 Beach, Outline. Ch.5.

64 Mtetwa, 'Duma', 21.

65 Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories. Ch.4.

66 Ibid.

⁶⁷ Mtetwa, 'Duma', 32, G-dates the foundation of Duma to *1715_±40.

⁶⁸ Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories. Ch.4. G-dates for this area include those for Zimuto and Nemavuzhe (ref. 57, above), Hama *1775_±36, Sexima *1803_±28, Gutu *1757_±36, the early Chivi dynasty, *1802_±28, Chirimuhanzu *1788_±24, Mapanzure *1808_±32, Neshuro *1778_±36, Nyakunuhwa (within Duma) *1776_±36, Charumbira *1743_±40 or *1824_±28.

⁶⁹ Ibid.; G-dates for this area : Wozhere *1862_±24, Kuvirimara *1816_±28, Mazvihwa *1850_±24, Mazviwofa *1858_±24, Chasura *1815_±28, the later Chivi dynasty *1858, Nhema *1855_±20, Banka *1867_±20, Mapiravana and Mudavanhu *1835_±36.

⁷⁰ A.K. Smith, 'The peoples of southern Mozambique : an historical survey', J.Afr.Hist., xiv, 4, 1973, 576-8.

⁷¹ Beach, Shona Dynastic Histories. Ch.4: G-dates : Mbedzi *1833_±28, Twamamba *1841_±28, Lemba *1871_±20.